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Pîrî Reis Revisited: The *Kitâb-ı Bahriyye* as a Source for Ottoman History

The Aegean Port of Kavala & the Island of Limnos (İlimli) as Described by Pîrî Reis

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Prologue

Thanks primarily to the works of scholars such as Svat Soucek, Thomas Goodrich and İdris Bostan,[1] the importance of the 16th century Ottoman seaman Pîrî Reis'[2] contribution to the fields of marine cartography and the science of navigation, is becoming increasingly well known to both the general reading audience and to the international scholarly community.

While much of the attention has understandably been focused upon the surviving fragment of his 1513 map depicting the Atlantic with the adjacent coasts of Europe and Africa, together with an extremely important early depiction of the New World based partially upon a map made by Columbus [**Plate 1**], it is his ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye*** [Book of the Navy or

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1 For an extremely useful study of this work, see: Svat Soucek: *Piri Reis & Turkish Mapmaking After Columbus* (*The Khalili Portolan Atlas*). London (The Nouri Foundation), 1996 [Hereafter: Soucek, 1996]. See also: J. B. Harley & D. Woodward (Eds.): *The History of Cartography*. 2 Volumes. Chicago, 1992, for important articles by T. Goodrich & S. Soucek.

2 For Piri Reis and his work, see: Svat Soucek: "Pīrī Re'īs" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd Edition. Volume VIII., pp. 308-309. Leiden (E.J. Brill), 1993 [Hereafter: Soucek, 1993] & İdris Bostan: "Pîrî Reis," in the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 34 (İstanbul, 2007), pp. 283-285 [Hereafter: Bostan, 2007].

Book of the Seas] with which the present paper is concerned. This work, a navigational/sailing guide for the Mediterranean (in Ottoman usage no distinction was made between the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, i.e., both were called the Mediterranean = *Akdeniz* = White Sea), was first written in 1521, and then reworked at the request of the Grand Vezir İbrahim Paşa, for presentation to the Ottoman Sultan Kânuni Süleyman (1520-1566) in 1526. It is a unique volume of texts and charts describing the ports and harbors the Mediterranean. While falling into the general category of portolan texts and charts, it supersedes that genre due to its scope. In his introduction to both the 1521 and 1526 versions Pîrî Reis informs the reader that it was his intent to provide a sailing manual for his fellow Ottoman sailors, as well to as make a gift to Süleyman on the occasion of his accession to the Ottoman throne, that led to his writing the ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***.



Plate 1

The 1521 version of the ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye*** was published by the German Turcologist Paul Kahle in a facsimile edition in 1926. To date this is the only edition of the earliest version of the work to appear in print;[3] while the presentation copy of 1526 was initially published in İstanbul in 1935 as a facsimile edition, with introduction and index in modern Turkish.[4] It was published a second time in 1988, this time together with a color facsimile of the manuscript, and a transcription in Latin characters of the Ottoman text, together with English and Turkish translations.[5]

Scholars too date, have, since its appearance seventy-five years ago, almost exclusively based their studies on the 1935 İstanbul edition of Pîrî Reis' 1526 version, and, in so doing, tended to ignore the Kahle edition of Pîrî Reis' earlier 1521 version.[6] Presumably, their myopia in this regard, stems from the fact that the author's revised 1526 version is considerably longer than his original 1521 work (130 chapters and 134 maps in the former, versus 210 chapters and 233 maps in the latter), a fact which has led scholars to implicitly accept that the 1526 form must contain all that was in the earlier version, plus additional materials appended to the later presentation copy.[7]

The present study, by comparing the two texts (1521 & 1526) and the maps which accompany them examines two segments of the ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***: a) its description of the Aegean port town of Kavala, and, b) the

3 The only published edition of the 1521 version of this work is: Paul Kahle: *Piri Re'is Bahrije: Das turkische Segelhandbuch fur das Mittellandische Meer vom Jahre 1521*. Band I. *Text*. Berlin & Leipzig, 1926 & Band II. *Ubersetzung* [Hereafter: Kahle, 1926: I. & Kahle, 1926: II.].

4 For the first published edition of the completed work which was presented to Sultan Suleyman at the instigation of the Grand Vezir İbrahim Paşa in 1526, see: Piri Reis: *Kitabı Bahriye*. İstanbul (Türk Tarih Araştırma Yayınlarından: No. 2), 1935 [Hereafter: Piri Reis, 1935].

5 Pirî Reis: *Kitab-ı Bahriye*. Volumes I. – IV. İstanbul (The Historical Research Foundation), 1988). [Hereafter: Piri Reis, Volume I, 1988].

6 Somewhat paradoxically, this edition, the color facsimile of which makes it the most useable version available is not mentioned in the standard Encyclopaedia entries. See: Soucek, 1993 & Bostan, 2007.

7 Soucek, 1993: p. 309 is the one scholar to have noted the fact that: "*the second version does not quite supersede the first*," and indeed that some of the author's personal reminiscences in the first edition are found only in a truncated form in the second.

information it provides on the Aegean island of İlimli (Limni or Limnos). It does so in an attempt to illustrate both the importance of this unique work as a source for 16th century Ottoman history, and to highlight the absolute necessity of utilizing both the 1521 and 1526 versions of the work. For, as these case studies will illustrate, their contents vary considerably and it is only by using both versions in conjunction with one another that the real importance of the work as a historical source become apparent.

Kavala:

The settlement Ottoman history of what was later to become the important Macedonian port town of Kavala [**Plate 2**], is, to say the least, unclear. Indeed, we possess no source which fully establishes that there was even a town in existence at the site in the century following the Ottoman conquest of the region in ca. 1387. While scholars are generally in agreement that the ancient Neapolis later became Byzantine Christopolis, which in turn became Ottoman Kavala, their consensus on this point, does not, in and of itself, serve to confirm an unbroken continuity of settlement and warrants further study.[8]

8 For a summary of this explanation, see: Timothy E. Gregory: "Christoupolis," in A. Kazhdan (Ed.): *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Volume I. New York & Oxford, 1991. p. 443 [Hereafter: Gregory, 1991] & D. Lazaridis: *Neapolis– Christoupolis – Kavala*. Athens, 1969.
Modern scholarship on Ottoman Kavala is found primarily in three articles by the Dutch scholar Machiel Kiel: 1) "Remarks on Some Ottoman-Turkish Aqueducts and Water Supply Systems in the Balkans– Kavala, Chalkis, Levkas, Aleksinac and Ferrai/Ferecik," in Marc van Damme (Ed.): *Die Turcicis Aliisque Rebus,Commentarii Henry Hofman dedicati*. Utrecht, 1992. pp. 105-139 [Hereafter: Kiel, 1992]; 2) "Ottoman Building ActivityAlong the Via Egnatia: The Cases of Pazargah, Kavala and Ferecik," in E. Zachariadou (Ed.): *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule, 1380-1699*. Rethymnon, Crete – 1996. pp. 145-158 [Hereafter: Kiel, 1996]; and, 3) "Kavala," in the *Turkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 25 (Ankara, 2002), pp. 60-62 [Hereafter: Kiel, 2002].
For Ottoman architectural monuments in the city, see also: E.H. Ayverdi: *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimari Eserleri*: Volume IV., Books 4-6 – Bulgaristan, Yunanistan, Arnavudluk. İstanbul, 1975. pp. 251-254 [Hereafter: Ayverdi, 1975] and İsmail Bıçakçı: *Yunanistan'da Turk Mimari Eserleri*. İstanbul, 2003. pp. 221-231.
The most recent works on Ottoman Kavala, are: a) Heath W. Lowry: *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350-1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*. İstanbul (Bahçesehir University Press), 2008

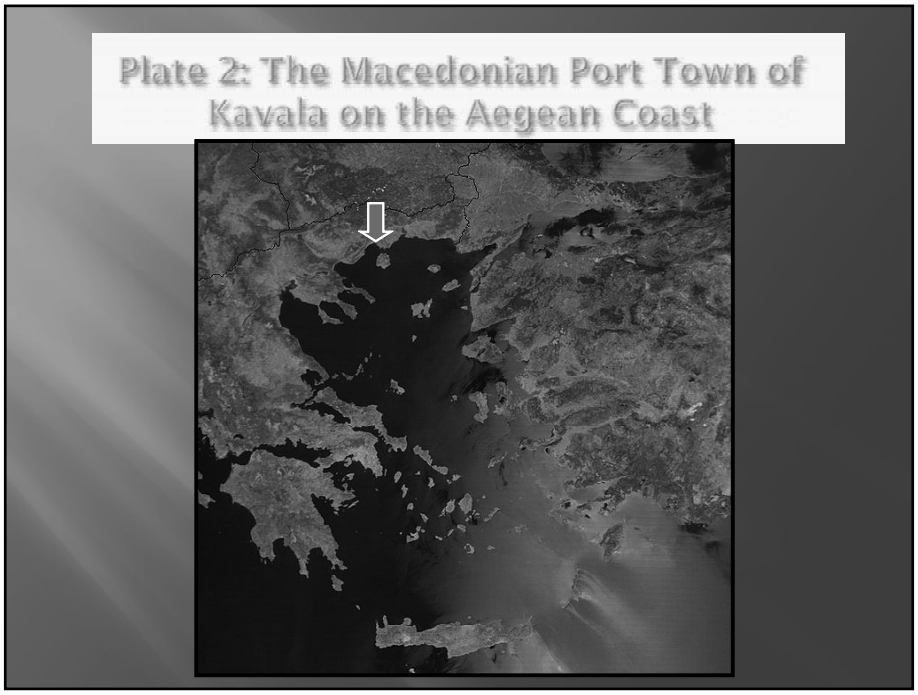


Plate 2

[Hereafter: Lowry, 2008]. For Kavala, see: Chapter VI. [pp. 227-242]: 'İbrahim Paşa & the Making of Ottoman Kavala, 1478-1667;' and, b) Heath W. Lowry: *In the Footsteps of the Ottomans: A Search for Sacred Spaces & Architectural Monuments in Northern Greece*. İstanbul (Bahçeşehir University Press), 2009. Pp. 142-149.

For Byzantine Christopolis, see: G. Bakalakis "The Last Komneni in an Inscription from Kavala" [in Greek], in *Archaelogike Ephemeris*, 1937. pp. 464-472; and by the same author: "The Walls Near Christoupolis [in Greek], in *Hellenika*, Vol.10 (1938), pp. 307-318; "Neapolis – Christoupolis – Kavala," [in Greek], in *Archaeologike Ephemeris*, 1936. pp. 1-48; "Pyrgos Tzekalos" [in Greek], *Festschrift S. Kyriakides.* Thessaloniki, 1953. pp. 499-507 & "The Toponyme Kavala," *1st Symposium on Kavala and its Region*. Thessaloniki, 1980. pp. 129-132. See also: F. Mallorichori & S. Tufayo "The Acropolis of Kavala," in *1st Symposium on Kavala and its Region*. Thessaloniki, 1980. pp. 341-359 & K. Tsorizis, ="Neapolis – Christoupolis – Kavala," in *Archaeologikou Deltion*. Vol. 53 (1998), pp. 387-418. I am indebted to Charalambos Bakirtzis for drawing these works to my attention.

The earliest post-1387 mention of a village/town named Kavala (قواله) is found in an Ottoman tax register (*tahrir defter*) compiled in the year 1478 (h. 883).[9] What this means is that for close to a century from the date of the first Ottoman occupation of the region until this register was compiled we have no way of determining whether there was any settlement on the site of the present-day Kavala.[10]

In support of the view that the site may have been temporarily uninhabited in the wake of the Ottoman conquest is the testimony of an entry in a Byzantine Short Chronicle dated September 1390, which reads: "*The town called after Christ, namely Christopolis, was taken by the unbelieving Muslims and quickly leveled to its foundations; its inhabitants were divided and spread over several districts and places*."[11]

This suggests that there had indeed been a break in settlement and raises the likelihood that in fact the Kavala which appears in the 1478 tax register was indeed a newly named and established village/town, albeit one which was constructed on the ruins of the former Christopolis.

The entry for Kavala in the 1478 Ottoman tax register lists the population of Kavala under the sub-heading of *nefs-i Kavala* (the inhabitants of Kavala), which is the manner in which urban populations normally are recorded. This, despite the fact that Kavala's population of approximately 467 inhabitants means that it would normally be listed as a: *karye* (village). As for the inhabitants themselves, they are broken down in two confessional groups: a community of 12 households (*hane*s) of *Müslümânan* (Muslims),[12] and a community of 75 households (*hane*s), 8 bachelors

9 This register is housed in the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* in İstanbul, Turkey, where it is catalogued as: *Tapu-Tahrir Defter* No. 7 [Hereafter: TT#7, 1478]. See also: Lowry, 2008: pp. 229-230.

10 I am unable to substantiate the claim of Machiel Kiel that the name dates to the Frankish period (ca. 1185-1242), and was derived from the fact that a postal station where horses were changed occupied the site. For this interpretation, see: Kiel, 2002: p. 61.

11 Peter Schreiner: *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, Vol. XII (Vienna, 1977), p. 343.

12 Lowry, 2008: pp. 229. The heads of the 12 Muslim households were: Murad – *Sofi* (Sufi Dervish); Ahmed – *Dukkandar* (Shopkeeper); İskender *veled-i* 'Abdullah (Iskender the son of the Slave of God, i.e., convert to Islam); Yusuf *Azad* (freed slave) – *Sofi* (Sufi Dervish); Hüseyin *veled-i* (son of) Ahmed; *Bakkal* (Grocer)

(*mücerreds*) and 8 widow-headed households (*bive*s) of *Gebran*s, i.e., Unbelievers = Orthodox Christians.[13] Stated differently, the approximately 60 Muslims (based on an average household size of 5) accounted for 12.8% of the population, whereas the approximately 407 Christians (based on 75 households with 5 members each plus 8 widow-headed households with 4 members each) accounted for the remaining 87.2% of the inhabitants. From the fact that over half of the Muslim heads of household have occupational titles attached to their proper names we may infer their relative newness, i.e., when a scribe recorded someone as Ahmed the Shopkeeper, or Mehmed the Tailor, this was generally intended to assist with the identification of individuals who were newcomers and unknown to one another or to the tax collector.[14]

Our next mention of Kavala is found in 1519, some 41 years after the 1478 *tahrir defter*. It too is found in a tax register and provides us the information that the town's Muslim population has grown from 12 to 22 *hane*s (households), while its 83 Christian households have shrunk to 71 (10 of which were headed by widows = *bive*s).[15] In the interval between these two surveys, Kavala's population has dipped slightly from 467 to 455. Consequently, the Muslim-Christian ratio was altered with Muslims now accounting for 24.2% (they had comprised 12.8% in 1478), and Christians accounting for 75.8% (down from 87.2% in 1478) of the total inhabitants.

Clearly, in 1519 Kavala was still little more than a good sized village. However, when the scribes who compiled the 1519 register visited Kavala,

Ucuz [?]; Abdi *veled-i* (son of) Şirmerd; Elvan – *Hayyat* (Tailor); Yusuf *veled-i* (son of) 'Ali; Hızır *veled-i* 'Abdullah (Hızır the son of the Slave of God, i.e., convert to Islam); Durmuş *veled-i* (son of) Mehmed – *Hayyat* (Tailor); and *birader-i o* Hasan (his brother Hasan, i.e., Durmuş' brother).

13 The majority of the Christian residents appear (on the basis of their names) to be Greek speakers, although there are also a fair scattering of Slavic names among them, e.g., Milosh, Dapino, Pilavitze, Rado & Dragon. A smaller percentage of the Christian inhabitants are listed with occupational titles, among which are a *Değirmenci* (Miller) and two *Papas* (Priests).

14 Heath W. Lowry: "Portrait of a City: The Population and Topography of Ottoman Selanik (Thessaloniki) in the year 1478," in *Diptycha*. Volume II. (Athens, 1980-1981), pp. 254-293. See, in particular: pp. 280-289.

15 Housed in the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* in İstanbul, Turkey, this register is catalogued as: *Tapu-Tahrir Defter* No. 70. A summary register it provides figures for Kavala on p.3. [Hereafter: TT#70, 1519]. It was compiled in h. 925 (1519).

the first of a series of steps which were ultimately to transform the town must have been well underway. Namely, Sultan Selim I (1512-1520) had completed the construction of the fortress of Kavala on the peak of the peninsula [**Plate 3**], i.e., on the site of the earlier Byzantine fortifications which had been razed in ca. 1387. For this knowledge we are indebted to the work of our Pîrî Reis and his ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***.



Plate 3

Not only was Pîrî Reis himself a navigator and captain who was intimately familiar with the Aegean coastline and its islands (he is presumed to have been born and raised less than 100 miles to the east of Kavala in the Ottoman naval center of Gelibolu [Gallipoli]). In the revised 1526 version of his work he clearly states that the fortress of Kavala was built by the late Sultan Selim Han (1512-1520) in a defile/pass (*derbend*) at the foot of a mountain:[16]

16 Piri Reis, Volume I, 1988: pp. Folio 54a & p. 247 & Lowry, 2008: pp. 230-231.

> "*…dağ dibinde Kavala derler bir derbend var. Mezkur derbendde merhum ve mağfur Sultan Selim Han hazretleri bir kal'e bina eyledi*"
>
> at the foot of the mountain there is a defile called Kavala. In this aforementioned defile the late Sultan Selim -whose sins are forgiven- built a fortress.'

His statement in this regard is the only contemporary source we have for the building of the Kavala fortress, and it is confirmed by the map which is found in the earlier (1521) version of his work, which shows a settlement at the site of Kavala labeled *Kala-i Kavala* (قلعه قواله), i.e., the

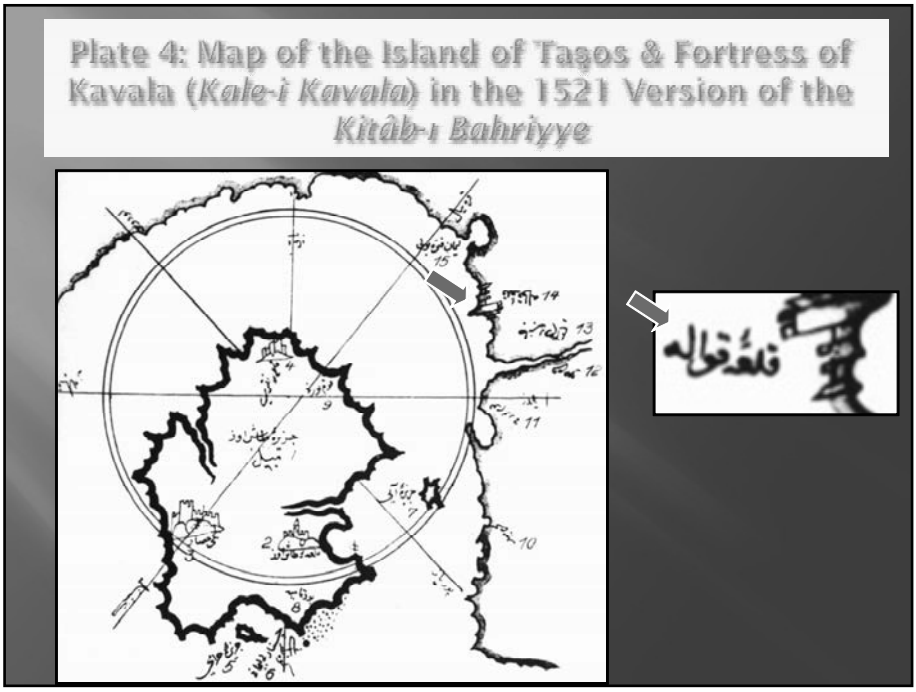


Plate 4

Fortress of Kavala [**Plate 4**], thereby confirming the statement in the 1526 version that it had indeed been constructed during the reign of Sultan Selim I (1512-1520).[17]

17 Kiel who never consulted Kahle, 1926 misses this point entirely. See: Kahle, 1926: I. – p. 13. While inscriptions preserved in parts of the walls are a clear indication

Somewhat paradoxically, the map of the region which is presented in the 1526 version, fails to note the *Kala-i Kavala* and in its place labels the site: *Hrisopoli* (Christopolis) [**Plate 5**], i.e., uses the earlier Byzantine name. This, and numerous other changes in the maps of the 1526 version

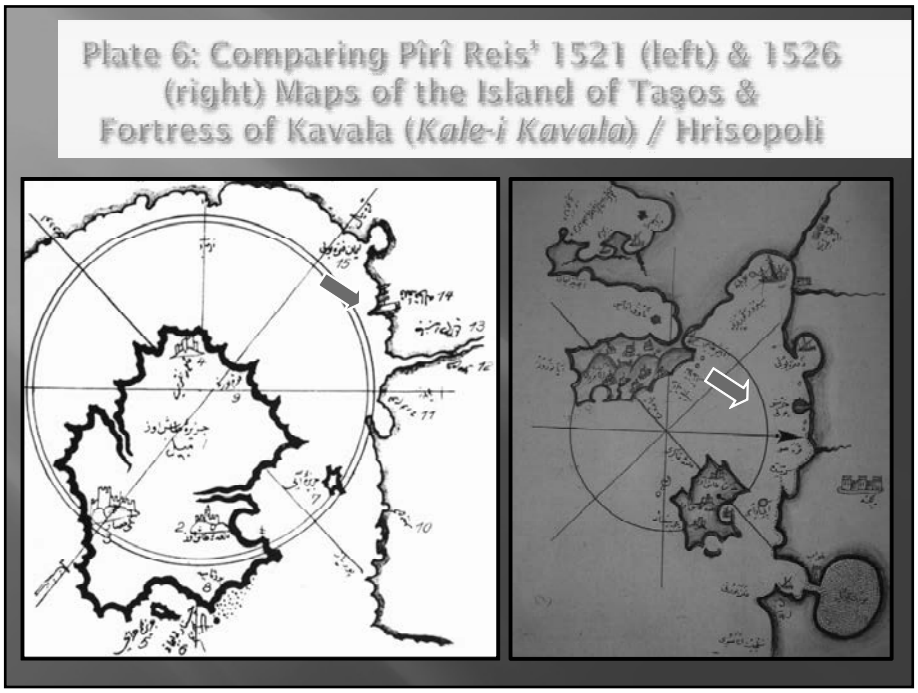


Plate 5

that there had indeed been earlier fortifications on the Kavala peninsula, the upper walled fortress (where such inscriptions are not found) is that which I am referring to as having been built by Selim I. The Map in **Plate 4** has had a legend added by Kahle, who wrote in #s 1-15. For the benefit of those who do not read Ottoman, I have provided the following breakdown of the sites identified by Kahle: #1 *Cezire-i Taşoz* (Island of Thasos); #2: *Kale-i Taşoz* (Fortress of Thasos); #3: [*Kale-i*] *Yeni Hisar* (the New Fortress); #4: *Kale-i Fakri/Kagırı* (Fortress of Fakri = Kakiritsi); #5: *Cezire-i Haramy* (Island of Kinira); #6: *Cınarlı Limani* (Plane Tree Harbor); #7: *Cezire-i Ayı* (Bear Island = Thasopoula); #8: *Portami* (Skala Potamjas); #9: *Kum Burnu* (Sandy Cape/Headland); #10: *Kiremide* (Keramoti); #11: *Kum Burnu* [*Korfezi*] (Sandy Cape Gulf); #12*: Kara Su* (Black Water River = Nestos River]; #13: *Canib-i Rum-ili* (Rumeli Coast); #14: *Kale-i Kavala* (Fortress of Kavala); & #15: *Liman-i Fitre Bolu* (Eleftheron Harbor).

raise the possibility that other hands may have played a role in its preparation.[18]

From the fact that Pîrî Reis is presenting the revised final 1526 version of his work to Sultan Süleyman, in hopes of monetary recognition, we may be certain that he is not crediting that ruler's father with having built a fortress for which his own intended patron was responsible. Clearly, as Pîrî Reis wrote in 1526, the individual responsible for the building of the Kavala fortress was Sultan Selim I (1512-1520).

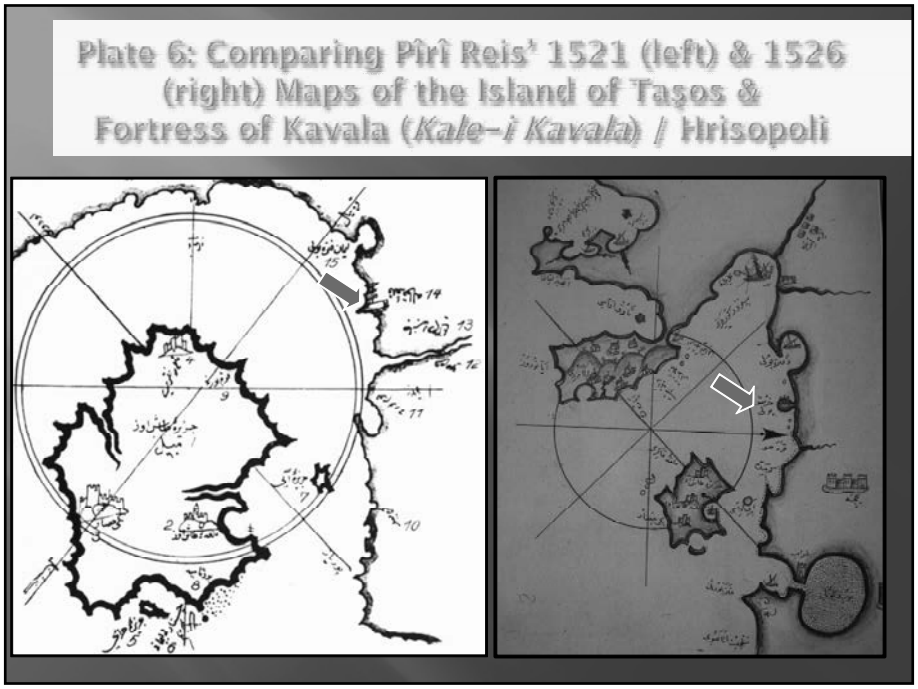


Plate 6

18 See: H. Yurdaydın: "Kitab-i bahriyye'nin telifi meselesi," in *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil, Tarih, Cografya Fakültesi Dergisi*, Volume 10 (Ankara, 1952), pp. 143-146, where the author discusses the claim by a certain Seyyid Murād or Murādi who claims to have 'ghost-written' the 1526 version. As the differences discussed in the present paper will highlight, there may be some truth in this claim?

Despite the clarity of the evidence in support of this interpretation as to the date of the construction of the Kavala fortress, the Dutch scholar Machiel Kiel, a pioneer in the study of Ottoman architectural remains in the Balkans, has rather inexplicably and repeatedly rejected the eye-witness contemporary testimony of Pîrî Reis in favor of ascribing the building of the Kavala fortress to Sultan Süleyman who ruled in the years 1520-1566.[19] He does so seemingly oblivious of the fact that if Pîrî Reis' 1521 map shows that the fortress was then in existence (and it does), and if the text of his 1526 version clearly states that it had been built between 1512-1520 (and it does), then he must be believed [**Plate 6]**

Kiel's reluctance to accept Pîrî Reis' testimony stems from two facts: a) he was unaware of, or chose not to utilize, the Kahle edition of the 1521 version of the ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***, whose map clearly shows the fortress to have been in existence when it was written; and, b) his examination of the second of the extant *tahrir defter*s (tax registers) covering Kavala, that of 1530,[20] uncovered no indication that there was a garrison or a fortress in Kavala when it was compiled, ergo the fortress must have been built later in the reign of Sultan Süleyman, i.e., post-1530.

The problem with this interpretation is that the 1530 register quite clearly does mention both the Kavala fortress [**Plates 7, 8, 9 & 10**] and its garrison which, at the time of its compilation, consisted of 42 individuals, including: a Commander (*Dizdar*), a Majordomo (*Kethüda*), a Prayer Leader (*İmam*) and 5 Artillerymen (*Topçu*s), together with a 34 man Garrison (*Mustahfızan*).[21] Kiel simply missed this entry in the research phase of his study.

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19 In Kiel, 1992 he is silent on the question of when and by whom the Kavala fortress was built. However, in Kiel, 1996: pp. 152-153 he claims (inaccurately as we shall see) that as the 1528 [sic. 1530] *tahrir defter* (tax register) makes no mention of a garrison that "*we would do better to regard the remarks about Selim I being the builder of the castle as a mistake of our informants*."

20 Housed in the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* in İstanbul, Turkey, this register is catalogued as: *Tapu-Tahrir Defter* No. 167 [Hereafter: TT#167, 1530]. See: p. 31 & 37. It is misdated by Kiel who states that it was compiled in 1528. See: **Plate 4**: Piri Reis Map of 1521 Showing *Kala-i Kavala*, i.e., the Fortress of Kavala [#14].

21 See: Lowry, 2008: pp. 231-232. This entry is found in TT#167, 1530: p. 31.

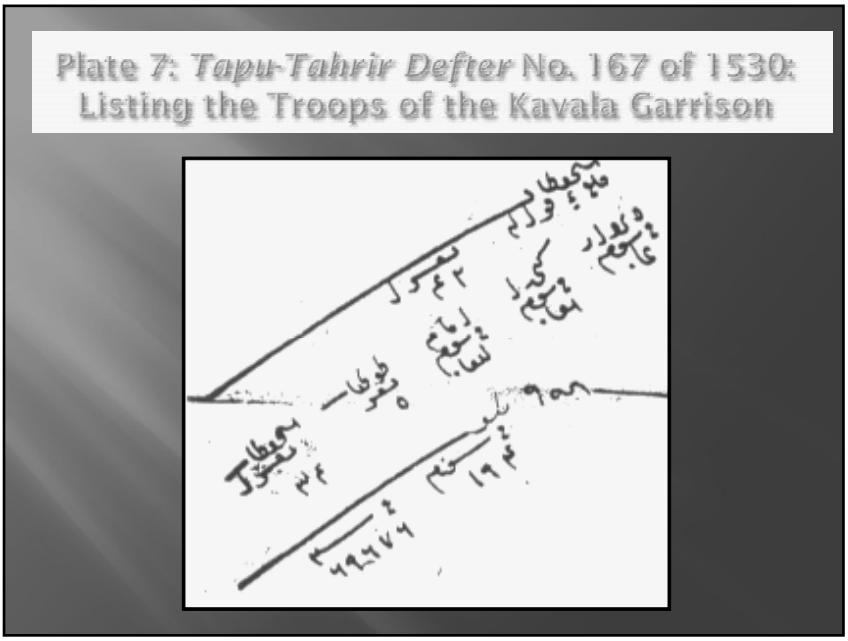


Plate 7

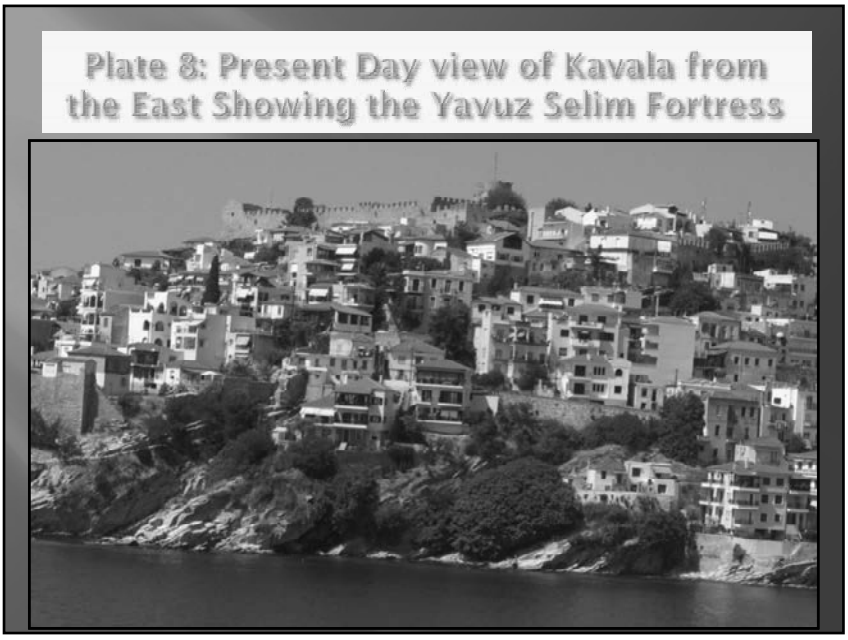


Plate 8

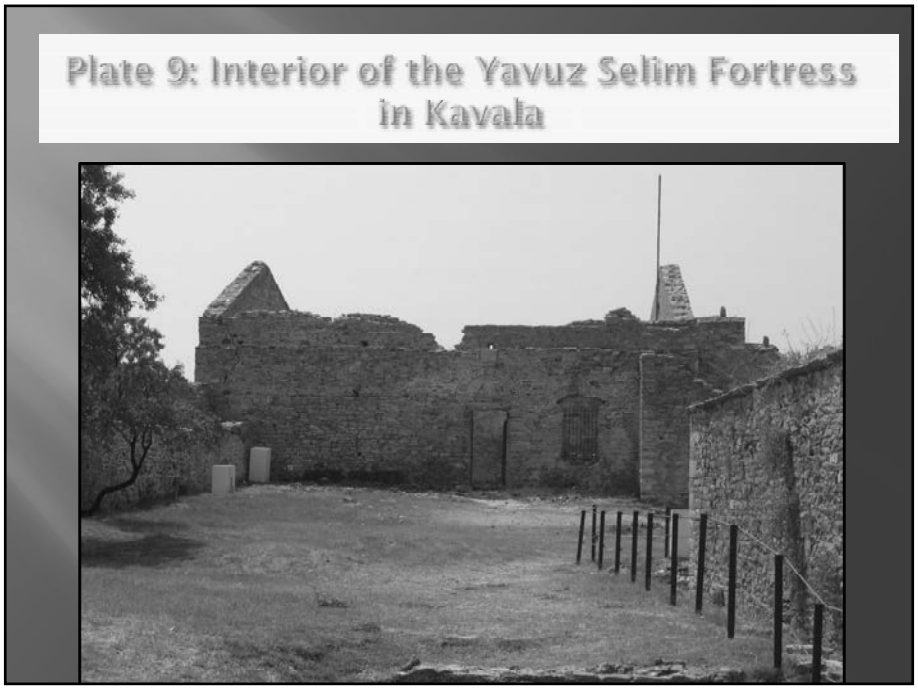


Plate 9

Pîrî Reis goes on to provide us an important clue as to the rationale for Selim I's construction of the Kavala fortress when he writes that he built it:

> in order to prevent unbelievers [Venetians/Pirates] who came by sea from hiding in the defile and attacking those who passed by. Up until that time these unbeliever's ships had caused a great deal of harm in this place.
>
> *kim denizden kafir kayıkları gelup ol derbende pinhan idup ayende ve revendeyi rencide idemiyeler. Bundan evvel kafir kayıkları ol yerlerde şena'at iderlerdi*.[22]

22 Piri Reis, Volume I, 1988: pp. 54a-54b & 247-248.

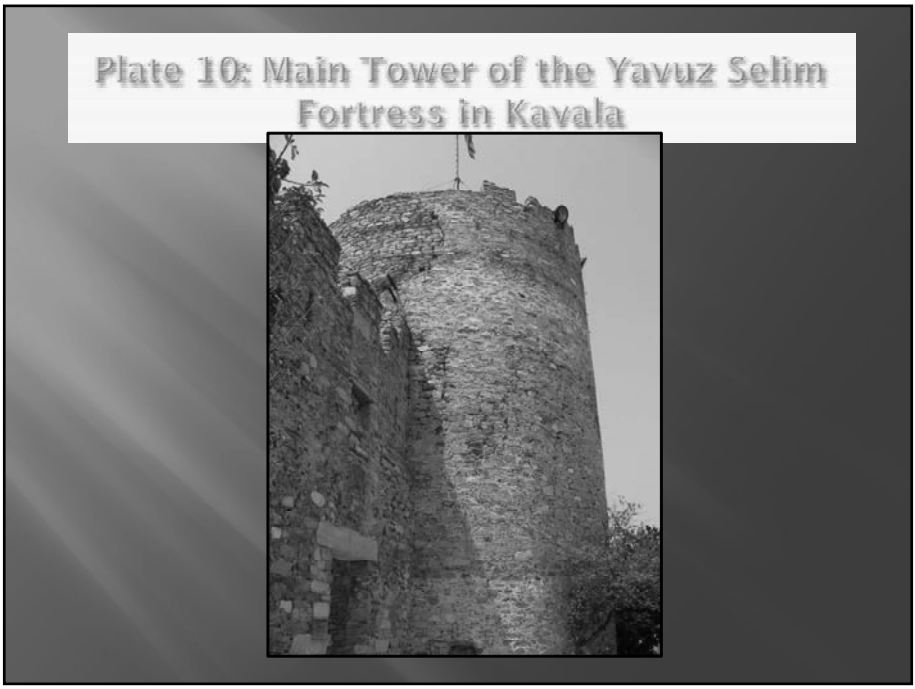


Plate 10

Imbedded in this passage is a clear rationale for the rebirth of Ottoman interest in Kavala. Namely, the town lay at that point on the **Via Egnatia** (the main east-west highway which from Roman times had connected Constantinople to Thessaloniki and points west) where the high mountains to the north forced it to run along the shore. As such the merchants and their goods which moved along it were susceptible to the ravages of Christian corsairs lurking along the coast.[23] It was to thwart the activity of these corsairs that Selim I undertook the construction of the Kavala fortress.

The sole source for these facts is Pîrî Reis' ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***. It allows us to reconstruct the otherwise unknown history of the Kavala fortress. By combining the information from the texts and maps of the 1521 and

23 For the Via Eganatia in this period see: E. Zachariadou (Ed.): *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule, 1380-1699*. Rethymnon, Crete – 1996 & in particular the chapter by N. Oikonomides: "The Medieval Via Egnatia," pp. 9-16. For Kavala, see: pp. 10, & 14-15.

1526 versions of the work, we are able to establish not only the date of the fortresses construction, we are likewise able to determine the reason that Sultan Selim I undertook its building.

The Island of İlimni (Limnos)

In the same manner that Pîrî Reis' intimate familiarity with the Aegean coastline, provided him the knowledge he conveyed relative to the building of the Kavala fortress, so too did his knowledge of the islands of the Aegean make his description of the island of Limnos a valuable source for a little known aspect of that island's history [**Plate 11**].

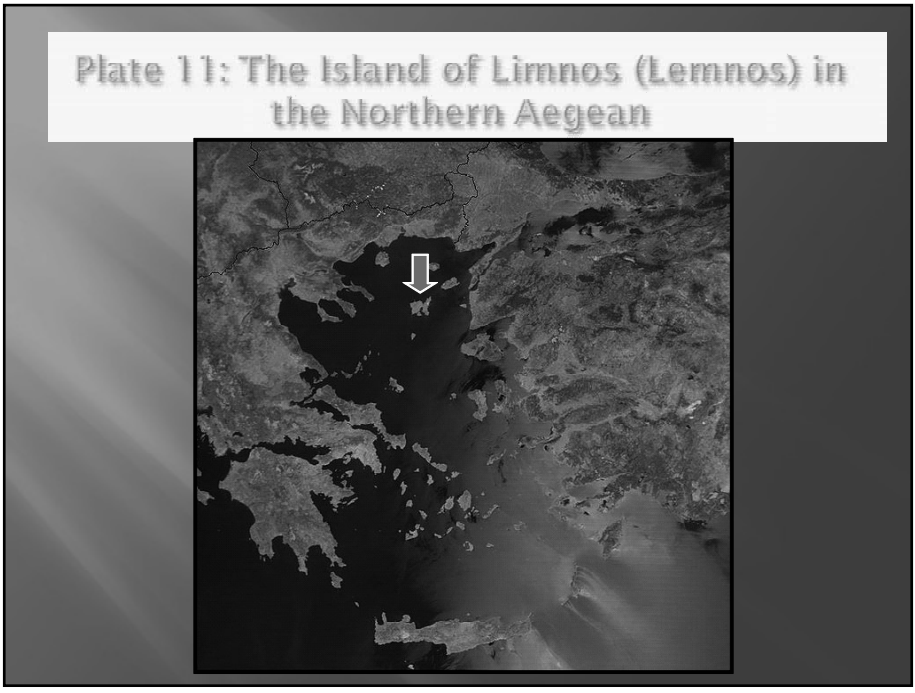


Plate 11

Specifically, Limnos was the sole source of what was believed by the ancient authors of medical treatises (such as Galen, Pliny and Dioscorides), and the Ottomans as well (in particular, Sultan Mehmed II), to be a

miraculous medicinal earth, which in the 15th and 16th century was thought to be the only preventative for the periodic scourge of plague.[24] Known variously as: a) *terra Lemnia* (Limnian Earth) by the ancients; b) *terra sigillata* (sealed earth) by the Italians; and, c) *tin-i mahtum* (sealed earth) by the Ottomans, the earth was a highly prized commodity, which, in an earlier work I have argued was among the primary causes of the long war between the Venetians and the Ottomans which lasted from 1463 to 1479.[25]

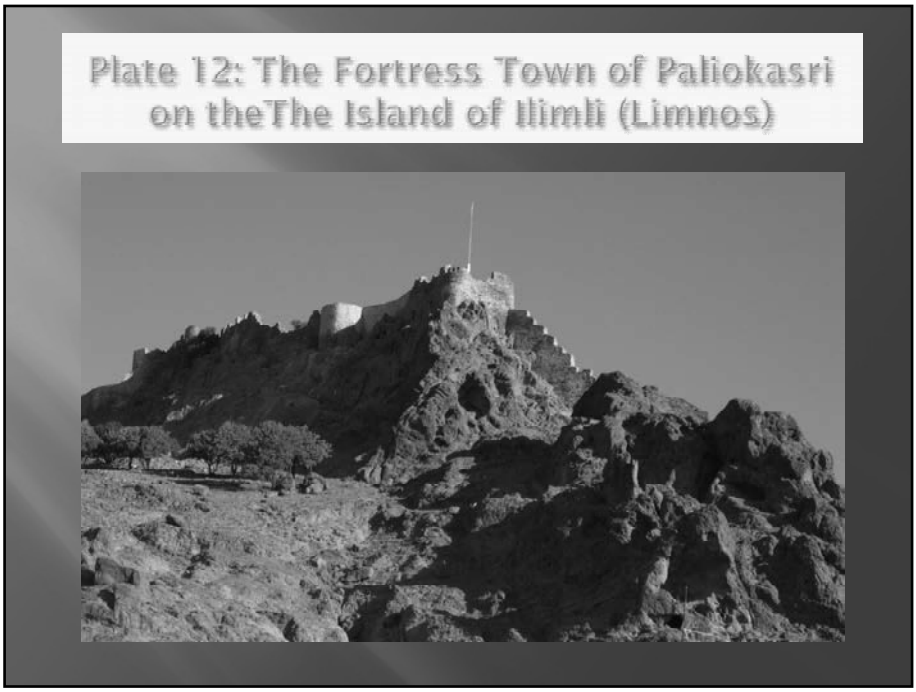


Plate 12

24 The most detailed descriptions of the Greek and Latin literatures on *terra Lemnia* are found in: a) Julian Raby: "Terra Lemnia and the Potteries of the Golden Horn: An Antique Revival Under Ottoman Auspicies," in *Byzantinische Forschungen*, Vol. 21 (1995), pp. 305-342 [Hereafter: Raby, 1995]; and, b) Henryk Jaronowski: 'An Earth by any Other name:' Pre-Ottoman Sources and Names for Lemnian Earth," in *Hellenika*, Volume 58, No. 1 (Thessaloniki, 2008), pp. 47-70.

25 See: Heath W. Lowry: *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities: Christian Peasant Life on the Aegean Island of Limnos.* İstanbul (EREN Publications), 2002. In particular, Chapter V.: 'Was the Ottoman Interest on Limnos Due to it being the Sole Source of Terra Sigillata?' pp. 153-171 [Hereafter: Lowry, 2002].

The Ottoman physical presence on Limnos in this period consisted of a twenty man garrison headquartered in the Fortress of Paliokasri on the West end of the island [**Plate 12**]; they were joined by some 3,000 islanders, all of whom were Greek Christians.

While *tin-i mahtum* (sealed earth) is occasionally mentioned in the Ottoman chronicles, a case in point being in the 17th century work of Naima who describes it as being: "*useful against pestilential fevers and the plague*,"[26] there are virtually no descriptions of the manner in which it was procured and processed in the extant Ottoman literature. On these subjects, our sources are the numerous European travelers who visited the island specifically for the purpose of seeing the site of this highly prized material.[27] From their works, and in particular those of Pierre Belon (who visited in 1546)[28] and Reinhold Lubenau (who visited in 1587),[29] we know that the Ottoman Sultans enjoyed a monopoly on the earth which was extracted one day a year (on the 7th of August, the Christian Feast of the Transfiguration) by the island's Christian priests (following an early morning service at the nearby Chapel of Sotira), while the Muslim members of the garrison watched from a distance on a nearby hill.[30]

Pîrî Reis, was familiar with these practices, and in the 1526 presentation copy of his ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***, wrote:

> The aforementioned island of İlimli (Limnos) is a low square island that measures one hundred twenty miles in circumference. On the aforementioned island they dig up and extract *tin-i mahtum* (sealed earth) on the seventh [sic. sixth] day of August.[31]

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26 Raby, 1995: p. 313.

27 For the accounts of travelers who visited Limnos for this purpose, see: Lowry, 2002: pp. 154-164 & 330-333.

28 Alexandre Merle (Ed.): *Voyage au Levant: Les Observations de Pierre Belon du Mans*. Paris (Editions Chandeigne), 2001. For Limnos, see: pp. 112-131.

29 W. Sahn (Ed.): *Beschreibung der Reisen des Reinhold Lubenau*. Book 2. Königsberg, 1930. For Limnos, see: pp. 156-164.

30 For a detailed discussion of the Christian nature of the practices, see: Lowry, 2002: pp. 154-171.

31 Piri Reis, Volume I, 1988: Folio 50b & p. 233.

Even this rather laconic entry allows us to infer that less than fifty years after the Ottoman acquisition of the island, *tin-i mahtum* had become an item so well known as to be included in Pîrî Reis' work without benefit of further explanation. Furthermore, it is clear that he associated it with a Christian ritual. For the seventh of August is the Feast of the Transfiguration, i.e., the entire process relating to the Ottoman extraction of the sealed earth was already cloaked in a Christian wrapping.

Were we only to look at the revised and expanded 1526 version of the ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***, our knowledge as to the practices associated with the extraction and elutriation of the Limnian sealed earth would end at this juncture. In this instance it more than pays us to look at the 1521 version as well [**Plate 13**]. For despite the fact that it overall is considerably shorter in length, this is one of many cases in which the information it

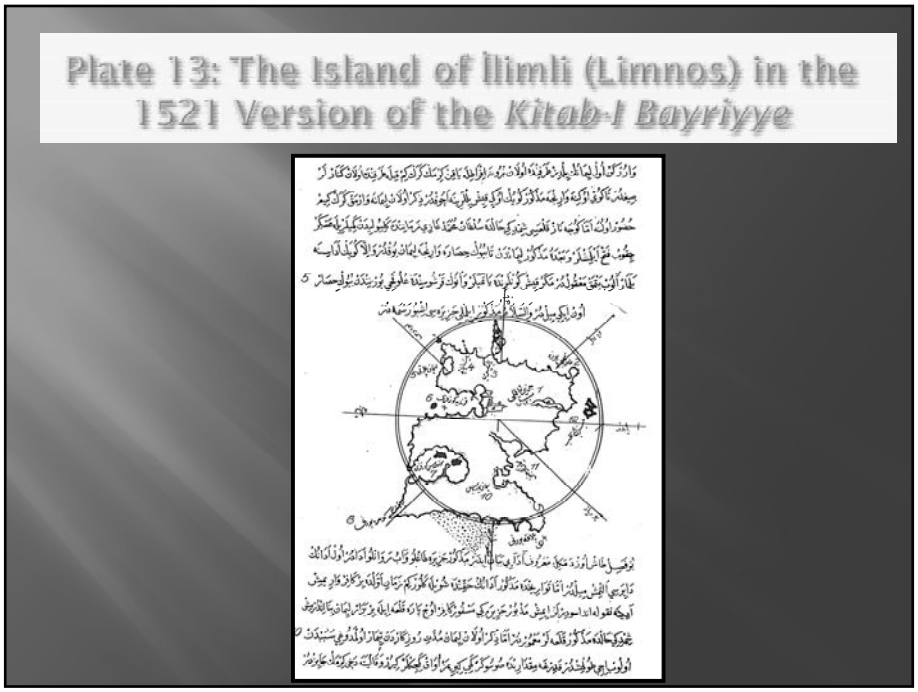


Plate 13

provides is more useful, indeed far lengthier, and more informative, than that found in the later version.[32]

Specifically, as relates to the Limnian sealed earth and the beliefs surrounding it, Pîrî Reis wrote the following:

This island İlimli] is a low, square shaped island. The circumference of this island is 120 miles. In the history books [*tevarih* = works of Byzantine Greek history] the following is said about the island: In the time of Jesus -Peace be upon him- a man called Ferestin, with the help of God, made this

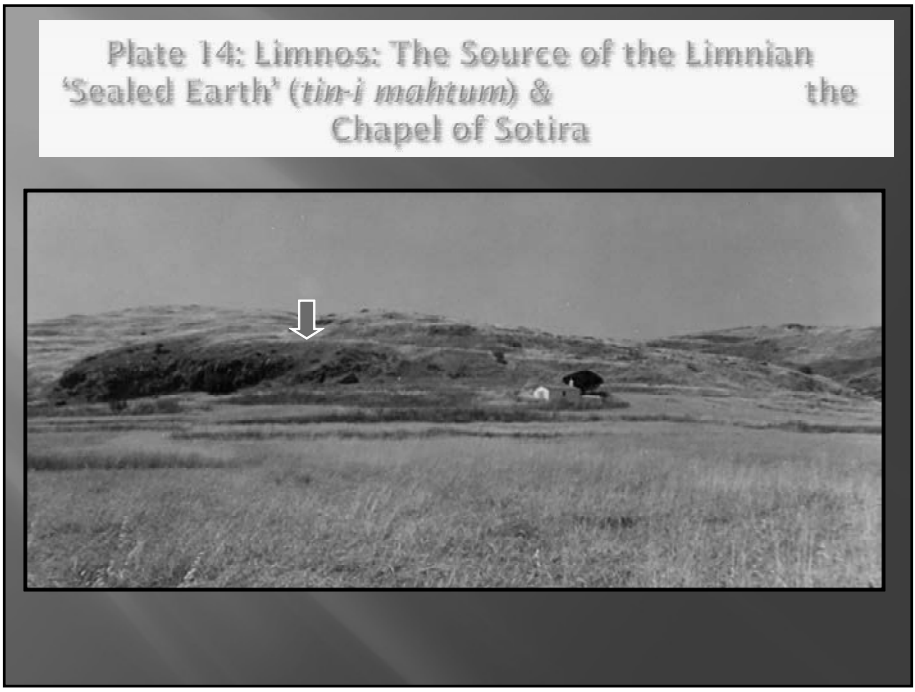


Plate 14

32 The Map of İlimli (Limnos) in **Plate 13** has had a legend added by Kahle, who wrote in #s 1-12. For the benefit of those who do not read Ottoman, I have provided the following breakdown of the sites identified by Kahle: #1 *Cezire-i İlimli* (Island of Limni=Limnos); #2: *Ulufeği Burnu* (Cape Ulufe?); #3: *Kale-i Palikasri* (Fortress of Paliokastron); #4: *Paşa Limani* (General's Harbour); #5: *Pilati Limani* (Harbour of Platy); #6: *Kondia Körfezi* (Gulf of Kondiya); #7: *Mondoros Körfezi* (Gulf of Mudros); #8: *Kösteri Burnu* (Cape Irene); #9: *Pilaki Burnu* (Cape Pilaki); #10: *Liman-i Baş* (Head Harbour); #11: *Liman-i Çökenez* (Çökenez Harbour); #12*: Cezire-I Kelb* (Dog Islet).

island his home. Day and night he cried and wept because of his separation from his master Jesus. One day on the seventh [sic. sixth] of August he was totally overwhelmed with pain due to his separation from his master Jesus. As he wandered around the island out of his senses he came to a certain place and because he was gasping and weeping he was showering an endless stream of tears on this place [**Plate 14**]. On the spot where his tears fell (following the advice of the praiseworthy and all powerful God) the sealed earth appears. Each year, when it comes to that day, the population of this island, as many as there are, go before daybreak to that place. And as long as the day lasts they dig out the earth looking for the vein and take out the reddish clay which they find.

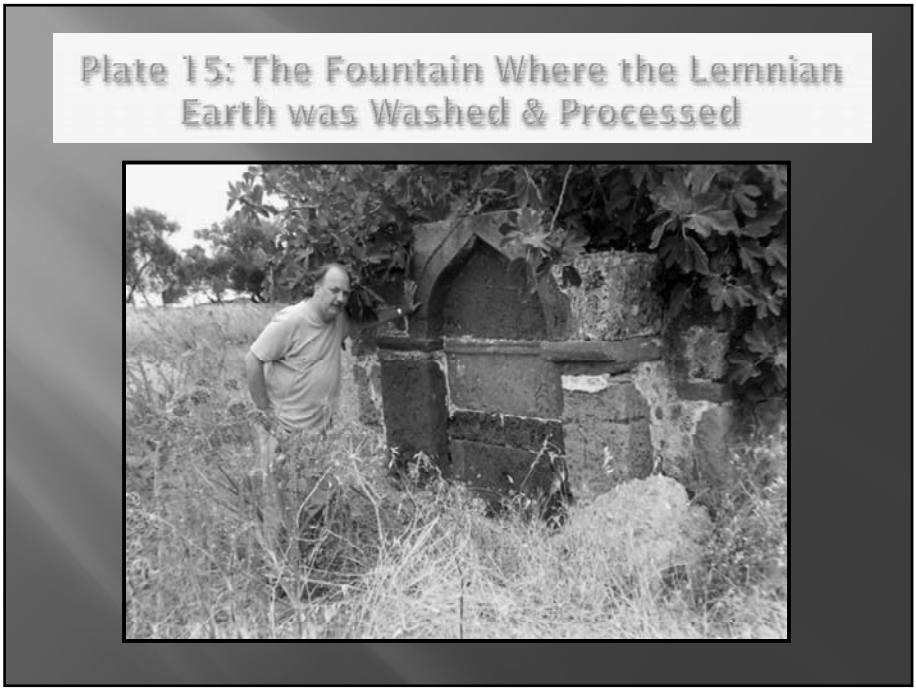


Plate 15

They mix it with pure water and make a kind of gruel [**Plate 15**]. After it becomes similar to *ayran* [yogurt mixed with water], they leave it at a designated place for a period of time. When the mud sinks down the watery part that remains is taken out and put into another pan until it separates. Then the water is poured away and what remains is put into sacks and they

leave it to drip like yogurt. Out of this they make pills and leave it in the shade to get totally dry. They set it aside for the Governement. What is left over from this process the local population uses.

The pills are stamped and sent to the Imperial commissariat [**Plate 16**]. The *çamur* [residue] brings fevers down and cures many maladies. It is something *mübarek* (blessed or Holy).[33]

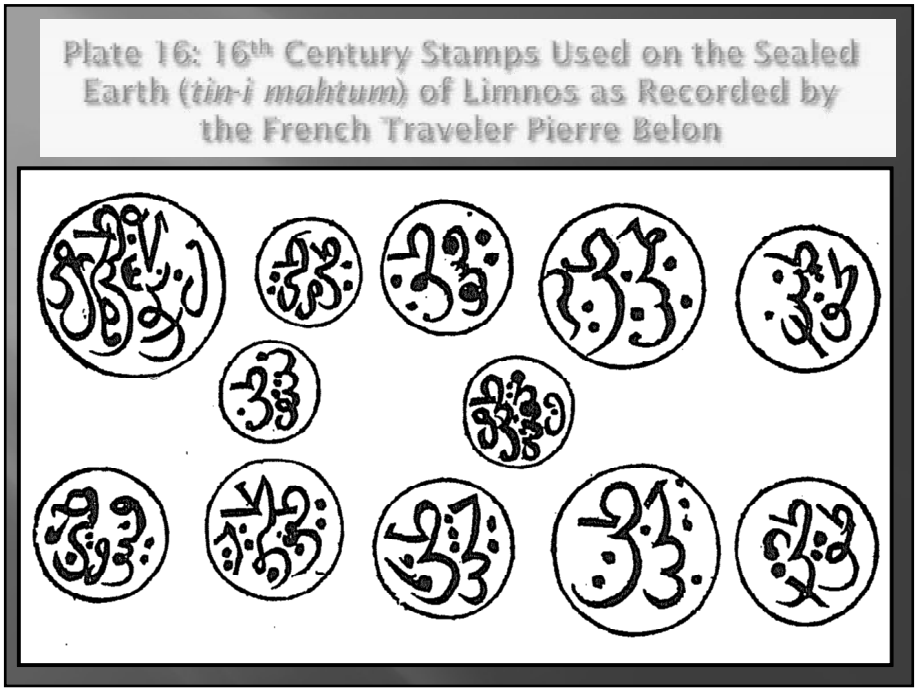


Plate 16

The value of the 1521 version is not limited to the detailed description it contains relative to the extraction of the 'sealed earth,' as in the case of Kavala its map of the island is likewise important. The map in the 1521 version [**Plate 17**] is a far more accurate representation of the island and it contains more detail in the form of toponyms than the 1526 presentation copy [**Plate 18**]. Here too, we see the extent to which the 1521 maps are preferable to those found in the 1526 'presentation' copy [**Plate 19**]. The

33 Kahle, 1926: Vol. I: pp. 8-9 & Vol. II: pp. 12-13. See also: Lowry, 2002: PP. 157-158.

1521 version was a working document intended for the author's fellow sailors, while that prepared for the Sultan, while a beautiful manuscript, is less valuable as a navigational guide.

This fact become readily apparent when we compare the legends found on the Limnos map in the two versions. For example: a) while the 1521 version named the Gulf of Kondia as the *Kondia Körfezi* (Gulf of Kondiya), the 1526 just writes: *Kondia*; and, b) similarly, what in the 1521 map is accurately labeled the: *Pilati Limani* (Harbour of Platy), in the 1526 version simply appears as *Pilati*. Obviously, for a seaman using Pîrî Reis' ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye*** as a navigational guide, it was important to know whether one was dealing with a 'gulf' or a 'harbour.'

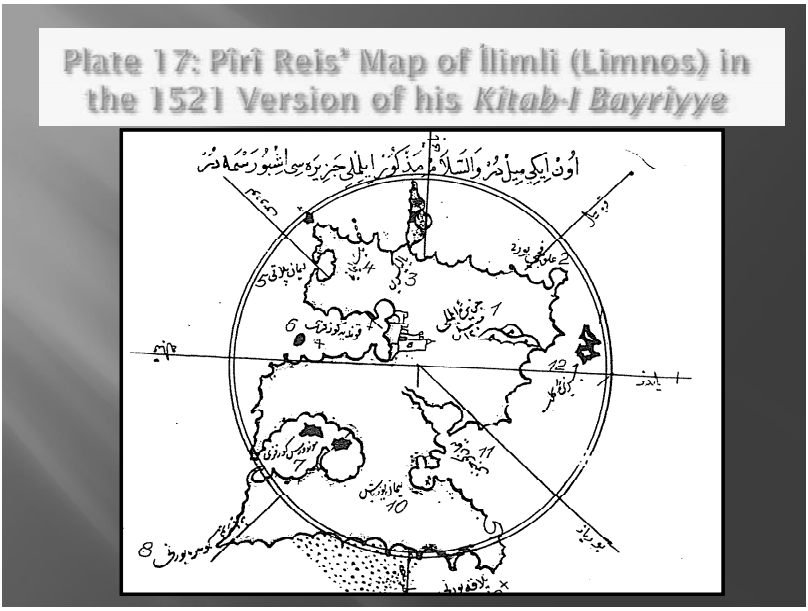


Plate 17[34]

34 The Map of İlimli (Limnos) in **Plate 17** has had a legend added by Kahle, who wrote in #s 1-12. For the benefit of those who do not read Ottoman, I have provided the following breakdown of the sites identified by Kahle: #1 *Cezire-i İlimli* (Island of Limni=Limnos); #2: *Ulufeği Burnu* (Cape Ulufe?); #3: [*Kale-i*] *Palikasri* (Fortress of Paliokastron); #4: *Paşa Limani* (General's Harbour); #5: *Pilati Limani* (Harbour of Platy); #6: *Kondia Körfezi* (Gulf of Kondiya); #7: *Mondoros Körfezi* (Gulf of Mudros); #8: *Kösteri Burnu* (Cape Irene); #9: *Pilaki Burnu* (Cape Pilaki); #10: *Liman-i Baş* (Head Harbour); #11: *Liman-i Çökenez* (Çökenez Harbour); #12*: Cezire-i Kelb* (Dog Islet).

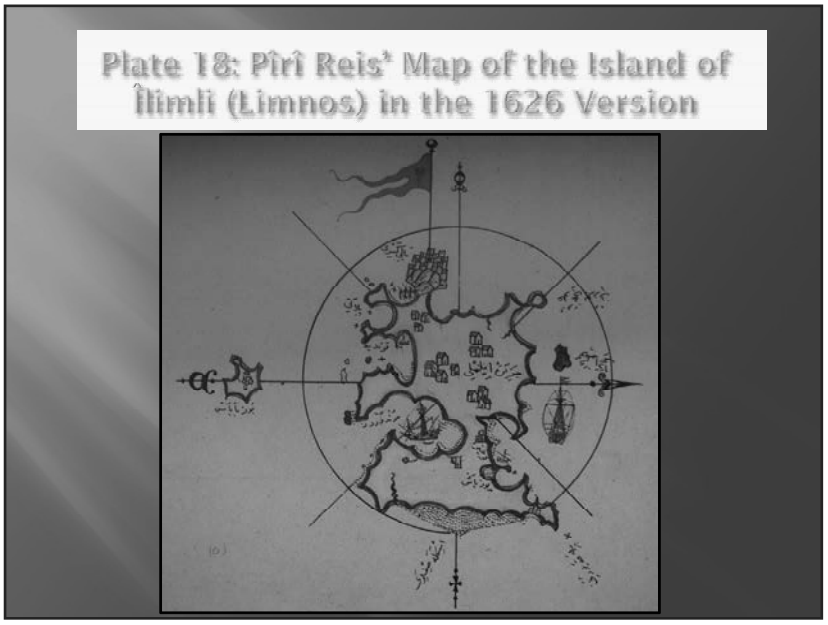


Plate 18

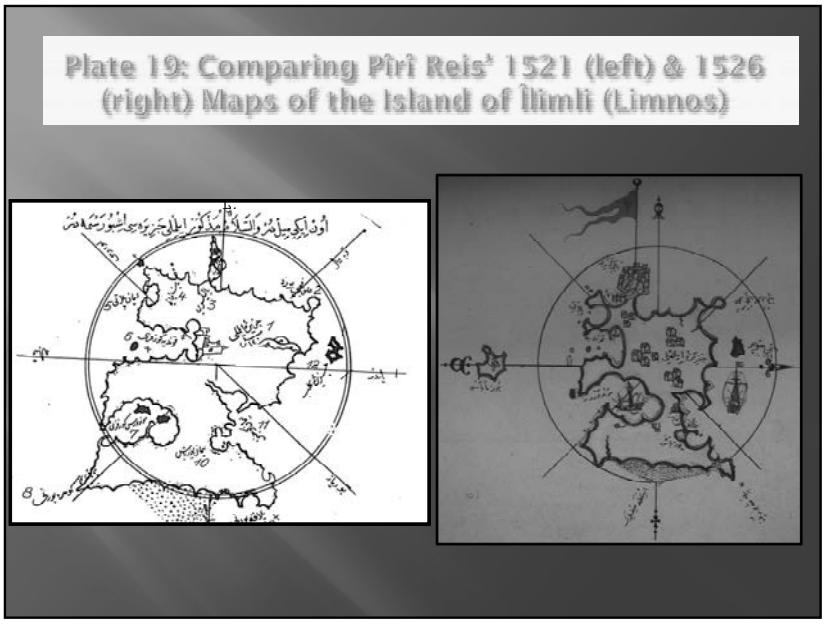


Plate 19

Conclusion

To the extent this exercise has succeeded in fulfilling its rather modest aim, several things should be apparent:

a) The value of Pîrî Reis' ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye*** to the historian working on the Aegean Basin has clearly yet to be tapped. As the two case studies presented herein have sought to illustrate: without this work there would be no way of dating either the construction of the Ottoman fortress at Kavala, or of having a contemporary eyewitness Ottoman source for the nature of the practices associated with the extraction of the 'sealed earth' of Limnos;

b) More is not always better: The earliest version of the ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***, that of 1521, must be consulted by anyone working with this source. While the 'presentation' copy of 1526 is longer, i.e., contains both additional maps and text, there are clearly instances in which the text of the earlier version is preferable, i.e., the information it provides relative to the 'sealed earth' of Limnos being a case in point;

c) Similarly, there are instances in which the maps of the 1521 version are superior to those of the 1526 'presentation' copy, i.e., it is the 1521 map of Thasos and the coast of Macedonia which lists the 'Fortress of Kavala,' and thereby confirms that it had indeed been constructed during the reign of Sultan Selim I (1512-1520), whereas the later 1526 map lists the older name of the settlement (Christopolis), and fails to note the existence of the Fortress of Kavala.

Buyer beware! Pîrî Reis' ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye***, can indeed be a useful source for the 16th century Ottoman history of events on land as well as at sea….but only if one takes the time to consult both its 1521 and 1526 versions. Clearly, the starting point for anyone wishing to utilize this unique work as a historical source must be the author's earliest version, that of 1521.[35]

35 Note: In the interests of full disclosure I should note that the case studies cited herein are simply examples I encountered while consulting Pîrî Reis' ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye*** in the course of researching and writing my ***Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities*** book on Limnos and my ***Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans*** book on Kavala, i.e., they do not result from a critical comparison of the 1521 and 1526 texts of the Pîrî Reis' work. I am therefore unable to state with any degree of certainty the extent to which similar differences occur throughout the full text (and maps) of the ***Kitâb-ı Bahriyye.***